

# Sen. Marklein: Defends rural schools, votes for historic increases for K-12 education funding

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CONTACT: Sen. Howard Marklein, [608-266-0703](tel:608-266-0703)

*Senator expresses concerns about changes to Sparsity Aid plan.*

MADISON – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) voted for the education omnibus motion as a part of the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) today. The package includes historic increases to per pupil aid, flexibility for school districts, a Rural School Teacher Talent grant program and Mental Health Collaboration Grants.

“Today we voted for a \$639 million increase for public education. This budget insures K-12 Education is well-funded and that we are meeting the needs of school districts all over our state,” Marklein said. “I have received support and encouragement from school districts throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District for the Governor’s budget.”

However, Marklein also expressed concerns to his colleagues about changes that were made to the Governor’s Sparsity Aid plan. Marklein has worked with his colleagues over the last several weeks to try to maintain the Governor’s plan for an increase to sparsity aid which primarily benefits rural school districts.

“By eliminating the sparsity aid increase in favor of more money for low spending districts, 25 of the 33 school districts in the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District receive less categorical aids than they would have received with the Governor’s plan. Overall, there is a \$2.2 million impact to my district alone,” Marklein aid. “I understand the intent of this change, but I don’t agree with it.”

“The per pupil funding increases, maintenance of sparsity aids and high cost transportation aids make the changes palatable,” Marklein said. “However, I think it is important to note the impact to the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District and other districts like mine throughout the state.”

The JFC is working to complete the legislature’s version of the state budget within the next two weeks. Following committee approval, the bill will move to the Assembly and Senate for consideration and then to Governor Scott Walker for signature.

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